

QUALITY REVIEW FOLLOW-UP MEETING

DEPARTMENT OF LAW

Introduction

A meeting to discuss progress made in implementing recommendations for improvement arising from the review of the Department of Law was held on 20 November 2007.

The Head of College wished to pay tribute to the Department of Law and acknowledge the success of their quality review. In particular, the review led to the collaboration of the Department and the Library, resulting in a pooling of resources to develop the Law section of the Library in Q+2. This has been successful for the purposes of professional accreditation and has resulted in a greatly improved Library space for Law students.

Present: Professor Denis Lucey, Acting Head, College of Business and Law
 Professor Caroline Fennell, Head, Department of Law & Dean, Faculty of Law
 Dr Norma Ryan, Director, Quality Promotion Unit
 Ms Deirdre O'Brien, Administrator, Quality Promotion Unit

Abbreviations

*PRG: Peer Review Group
QPC: Quality Promotion Committee
HR: Human Resources*

*VP: Vice-President
QIP: Quality Improvement Plan
BL: Business and Law*

PRG Recommendation	QPC Recommendation	Follow-up Report Nov 07
That the Department benchmark itself against other European Law Schools that it would wish to emulate; this would enable the Department to identify its strengths and key areas, such as found in a successful front-ranking law school.	Recommendation endorsed. The QPC suggested that the Department consider benchmarking itself against US Schools of Law in addition to European ones and re-iterated the conviction of the Committee of the importance of this exercise on an on-going basis.	Not implemented The Department believes that the most useful point in time to undertake a benchmarking exercise would be in preparation for their next Quality Review. The Department has very close links with international top-ranking law schools.
That the identity of the Department and Faculty of Law be preserved, along with its academic and financial autonomy, within the new University structures. It further recommends that a review of the workings of the new College be performed after a two- year period.	Recommendation endorsed. The QPC acknowledged the importance of Law in the University and the broader community. However the QPC also suggested that the Department should consider how it can contribute to College and inter-College activities within the University.	Ongoing This issue remains to be addressed. The new University management structures and the RAM have yet to be finalised. The budgetary requests of the Faculty have been met by the College to date. The Head of College has guaranteed that the Department will retain its identity within the College of Business & Law.

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<p>Re departmental management structures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - that consideration be given to amalgamating some of the departmental committees; - that meetings be more time controlled; - the establishment of ad hoc working parties to deal with specific issues and then dissolved; - the establishment of an executive management group 	<p>Recommendation endorsed.</p> <p>The QPC suggested that the Department examine closely the relationships between departmental committees and faculty committees and seek to reduce any unnecessary overlap.</p>	<p>Implemented and ongoing</p> <p>The Department has reviewed its structures, rationalised departmental committees and strengthened committee structures.</p> <p>The Department has not established an executive management group as this would disenfranchise departmental members. The Department has found that, given its size, full departmental meetings are extremely manageable.</p>
<p>Re administrative support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - that when staffing levels are being considered administrative support must also be determined. - Given the strains and stresses of students in a modern university the PRG recommends that some facility be available for administrative staff to speak with students in privacy when the need for one-to-one attention arises. This should be urgently addressed as space becomes available. - that some flexibility be introduced in office opening hours at appropriate times. 	<p>Recommendation endorsed.</p> <p>The QPC noted that as the RAM is implemented it will make transparent the balance and level of administrative support. It will also give more freedom for discretion in types of appointments.</p> <p>The QPC noted and welcomed the actions already taken by the Department in relation to provision of privacy for students and the lengthening of the opening hours.</p>	<p>Implemented and ongoing</p> <p>A dedicated administrator for the postgraduate programmes in Law has been appointed.</p> <p>Administrative staff in the main departmental office can speak privately with students in Room AL142, however, this solution remains unsatisfactory for all involved, but given space constraints is all that can currently be done.</p> <p>The administrative office for Law is now open to students for the entire working day.</p>
<p>That all degree programmes be reviewed at regular and cyclical intervals.</p>	<p>Recommendation endorsed.</p> <p>The QPC requests that specific details are included in the Quality Improvement Plan to be developed.</p>	<p>Implemented and ongoing</p> <p>The Department conducted a substantial review of its programmes and held a Strategic Planning day. All short term decisions made at this meeting have been implemented to date.</p>

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That a thorough review of the Personal Tutor system be undertaken.	<p>Recommendation endorsed.</p> <p>QPC noted and welcomed prompt actions already taken by the Department in regards to his recommendation (<i>Department has already performed such a review, as part of the staff discussion day on 25 April 2006. Proposals arising out of this review, which will be implemented in the next academic year, include fuller integration of the scheme into the initial first-year student orientation, scheduling of initial group meetings, and further steps to clarify the role of the scheme to the students.</i>)</p>	Implemented
That the staff continue to commit themselves fully to the Evening Law degree which has added so much to the external profile of the Department.	Recommendation endorsed.	<p>Implemented and ongoing</p> <p>The Department is fully committed to the Evening Degree programme and is now giving full credit in terms of hours for evening teaching.</p> <p>The recognition of evening teaching for promotional purposes is a university wide issue.</p>
That the Department maintain a close working relationship with the Language Departments in the continuation and development of these successful programmes.	Recommendation endorsed.	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>The Department has a Languages Board of Studies with a set schedule of meetings and a good working relationship. All issues are discussed and negotiated at this Board.</p>
That further expansion of the postgraduate programmes be made contingent upon the existence of appropriate staffing resources.	<p>Recommendation noted.</p> <p>The QPC noted that additional fee income from postgraduate courses and research grant income would provide funding for additional academic staffing.</p>	<p>Implemented</p> <p>Postgraduate student numbers in the department have increased very substantially and 2 additional lecturers have been appointed.</p> <p>The Department is currently implementing a pilot scheme whereby those supervising more than 3 PhD students gain extra workload credit. This will be reviewed at the end of the academic year.</p>

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That the Department and the University together consider the support available for international students, its adequacy and further supports required.	Recommendation endorsed. The QPC noted that the RAM will take into account international students and the additional support required. QPC welcomed response of the Department.	Ongoing The newly appointed administrator for Postgraduate students is developing the support for international postgraduate students. The wider issue of support for all international students is for the University to consider.
That the Department of Law identify particular areas of strength in its research; prioritise these and base recruitment of senior staff on these developments.	Recommendation strongly endorsed. QPC recommends that the Department gives further consideration to actions that might be taken in regards to this recommendation, for example recruitment of senior staff in specific areas.	Ongoing The areas of strength within the department will be kept to the forefront when appointing new staff, however, the department will also continue with its policy of non-specific advertisements in order to ensure the appointment of the best person available.
That a new senior post should be established, with a brief to facilitate research funding in Law.	Recommendation noted. The QPC considered that action on this recommendation should be considered in the context of the strategic plan under preparation in the College of B&L. The QPC also referred the Department to the comments of the Vice-President for Research Policy & Support and the desirability of establishing closer links with the Research Office.	Not implemented This recommendation will be considered in the context of the College of B&L Strategic Plan.
That the Department continue its development of access to electronic resources and stresses the vital importance of bringing its holdings in books and journals and e-library to levels commensurate with its needs and aspirations for teaching and research.	Recommendation endorsed. The QPC noted that the core budget of the University is going to decrease and there will be an increasing need to fund such resources externally. Furthermore, the QPC noted the very successful activities undertaken by the Department in this area to date. The QPC also noted that on average 3,000 pages were printed on University printers, free of charge, by each postgraduate student in the Department and 1,000 pages by every undergraduate student.	Ongoing Progress has been made in this regard and regular use is being made of the IReL. The new IT/Multimedia support officer (see recommendation below) has also facilitated the implementation of this recommendation. The IT/Multimedia support officer is also providing ongoing and individual training for staff in the use of online resources.

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That there is an urgent need for an IT support officer for routine maintenance of staff and postgraduate facilities, for servicing the requested undergraduate computing facility, and for assisting staff in developing further the innovative work of the Department.	Recommendation noted. The QPC suggested that the appointee liaise closely with the Computer Centre. The Computer Centre would welcome the Department outlining the problem areas and liaising with the Director of the Computer Centre on actions to be taken.	Implemented An IT/multimedia support officer has been appointed. The support officer has ensured the maintenance of facilities and rationalised equipment where possible, however, equipment still remains a problem.
That, should adjoining space become available in Aras na Laoi, the University should give priority in allocation to the Department of Law while also pursuing a separate facility for the Department.	Recommendation endorsed.	Ongoing The issue of space is still outstanding and remains an urgent issue for the department. A medium term solution may arise when the Maths Department moves to the new IT building and space is freed up in Aras na Laoi. In the long term a purpose built building is required to solve the spacing needs of the Department. To this end Law has committed its income generated monies to a ring fenced fund for the Law Building.